



# Frequently Asked Questions about Job Modifications

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## 1. What is a job modification?

A job modification is an adjustment or alteration to the way a job is performed. It is intended to accommodate the restrictions imposed by a work-related injury. A job modification may be temporary during recovery or it may be permanent.

## 2. Why should a job be modified?

Modifying a job helps an injured worker return to work more quickly. It typically decreases time loss and long-term disability.

## 3. Can you give me some examples of job modifications?

A worker developed carpal tunnel syndrome as a result of frequently gripping small pliers during mechanical work. His restrictions include reducing the amount of force he uses to grasp tools. Using pliers designed with larger and longer handles will reduce the force.

A worker with a back injury who has lifting restrictions has to manually lift boxes off of a conveyor onto a pallet. The worker may benefit from a mechanical lifting device.

Manual Lift



Mechanical Lift



## 4. When can a job modification consultation be requested?

A job modification consultation should be requested:

- When the physician has identified restrictions that prevent the worker from doing his/her regular job.
- When a worker with an accepted workers' comp claim is off work due to the injury.
- When a worker with an accepted workers' comp claim may be taken off work due to the injury.
- When an employer wants to modify the workplace for a worker whose injury is covered by an accepted workers' comp claim.

## 5. How does a job modification get started?

A number of involved parties may request a job modification consultation: The attending physician, employer, consulting health-care or vocational service provider, claim manager, third-party administrator or the worker. Any existing work restrictions should be identified at this time.

All requests for job modification consultations should be directed to the claim manager, who will approve or deny the request.

## 6. Who is the job modification consultant?

Typically, the job modification consultant is a physical or occupational therapist, a vocational service provider, an ergonomist, or a member of the employer's staff. *Vendors may not provide a job modification consultation when they are the supplier of equipment for that modification, without prior approval from the claim manager.*

## 7. Who decides what type of modification is appropriate?

The job modification consultant will assess the work site and make recommendations to accommodate the worker's restrictions. The recommendations should be based on collaboration with the employer, the worker and the attending physician.

## 8. Who pays for job modifications?

The Department of Labor and Industries (L&I) pays for job modifications from the Second Injury Fund. L&I allows up to \$5,000 for job modification assistance per worker per job site. There must be an employer-employee relationship and restrictions that prevent the worker from performing his/her regular job before L&I can pay for a job modification. Use of the job modification benefit does not affect the employer's industrial insurance (workers' compensation) premiums.

Employers may choose to directly pay for the modifications without using the Second Injury Fund. Self-insured companies may submit a reimbursement request for expenditures to the Self-Insurance section at L&I.

## 9. Who owns equipment purchased as part of a job modification?

For any equipment or materials purchased using job modification funds, the employer and the worker must sign an agreement that specifies who owns the equipment.

## 10. How can I get more information about job modifications?

*Provider Bulletin 99-11 – Job Modifications and Pre-Job Accommodations* explains how to implement job modifications and pre-job accommodations. To obtain a copy or get more information, call the L&I office nearest you and ask to talk with the Risk Management Supervisor, Therapist Consultant or Vocational Services Consultant. Provider Bulletin 99-11 is also available online at [www.LNI.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Providers/Billing/ProvBulletins/](http://www.LNI.wa.gov/ClaimsIns/Providers/Billing/ProvBulletins/).

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